

character of the enthusiasm with which the Prime Minister was greeted by the people wherever he went; and the very definite assurance which we received from Signer Mussolini that the policy of Italy was one of peace. Speaking of the Mediterranean in particular, he assured us that he was well satisfied with the Anglo-Italian Agreement, by which both parties undertook to respect the *status quo*." If the British statesmen really took these assurances of a dissatisfied Dictator at their face value they ought to have known better, and they were quickly undeceived. The Italian people was peaceful enough, but their ruler cherished ambitions which could only be realized by war. Nominally unofficial demands for a share in France's colonial empire had begun at the end of 1938, and the Italian press, which used the soft pedal curing the British visit, renewed its bellowings the next moment. An alliance was signed between Italy and Germany in April 1939 promising military support if either was at war : there was not even the customary pretence that it was only to operate in case of defence against aggression. Mr. Eden's suspicions were confirmed when the Anglo-Italian treaty was broken by the rape of Albania on Good Friday, April 7. Once again the promise to respect the *status quo* proved to be a scrap of paper. We contented ourselves with a protest. A year later, without a shadow of provocation, Mussolini declared war on the two Powers who had helped to make Italy a nation and to save her from defeat in 1917.

XVI. THE REMILITARIZATION OF THE RHINELAND.

The restoration of the armed might of Germany, inaugurated by the Weimar regime and accelerated by the Nazis, presented an even greater problem than that of

Italy's colonial
ambitions. Should we continue to content
ourselves with
verbal protests when treaties were infringed,
or should we
wait till a smashing blow was struck at the
edifice of security
and then make a stand ? The practical question
arose when
on March 7, 1936, German armies marched into
the demili-
tarized Rhineland zone, trampling not only the
dictated Treaty
of Versailles but the freely negotiated Locarno
pact underfoot.
Hitler's contention that the Franco-Russian
defensive agree-
ment, signed in 1925 and ratified in 1936, had
broken the spirit
if not the letter, of Locarno was a mere pretext,
for he declined
to submit it to The Hague Court. He would in
any case have
taken the step as soon as he felt strong enough
to do so with